

A Family Preparedness Guide

This Guide Will Help You to:

Learn what to do before, during, and after an emergency

Create an emergency plan for your family

Prepare an Emergency Go Kit

Contact specific District agencies for help

Receive emergency notifications at home, school, or work



Mayor Anthony A. Williams
Government of the District of Columbia



When Emergencies Occur

An emergency can occur quickly and without warning. The most important thing you can do to keep yourself and your family safe from an emergency is to prepare, stay calm, and follow instructions from emergency personnel.

This brochure will help you and your family develop an emergency plan, assemble a preparedness kit, and share some basic information on what to do before, during, and after any emergency. The brochure will also provide you with important information about how to obtain emergency and ongoing disaster recovery assistance.

Message from the Mayor:



Dear Residents,

As the world becomes smaller and the threats of terrorism and natural disasters become of increasing concern, we as a community, a city and a country continually seek ways to better protect ourselves and those near to us from risks to health, safety and property. We daily take warning from the tragedy of September 11, 2001, and incidents of the years since, so that we can better anticipate and prepare for the emergencies that may strike us. On an ongoing basis, the District government, businesses, schools, and community have been working together to increase our preparedness.

The District has reviewed and updated the Family Emergency Preparedness Guide. The Guide was created to assist you and your family in protecting yourselves in the event of an emergency. I hope that you find the Guide helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Anthony A. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Anthony A. Williams
Mayor

~~~~~

# Before An Emergency Strikes

An emergency can occur without warning, leaving little or no time for you and your family to plan what to do next. It is necessary for you to learn about the things you can do to be prepared-before an emergency occurs. Two actions that will help you do this are to develop an emergency plan, and prepare an Emergency Go Kit.



## Create an Emergency Plan

Before creating your household emergency plan, use this guide to learn about the types of emergencies that may affect your community, how you'll be notified of an event, and plans that may already be in place to deal with these events. In the District, we use the four-part Alert DC citizen notification system (see page 3). It is important that you listen to instructions. Emergencies may strike when your family members are away from home, so find out about plans at your workplace, school, or anywhere else you and your family spend time. After creating a household emergency plan you should take the time to review it with your family every six months. Steps to take in creating a household emergency plan include:

- 1 Meet with household members and discuss the dangers of possible emergency events, including fire, severe weather, hazardous spills, and terrorism.
- 2 Discuss how you and your family will respond to each possible emergency.
- 3 Discuss what to do in case of power outages or personal injuries.
- 4 Draw a floor plan of your home. Mark two escape routes from each room.
- 5 Teach adults how to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at main switches. *\*If for any reason you do turn off natural gas service to your home, call Washington Gas to restore service. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RESTORE GAS SERVICE YOURSELF.***
- 6 Post emergency contact numbers near all telephones and pre-program emergency numbers into phones with auto dial capabilities. Emergency phone numbers are found on the back of this guide.
- 7 Sign up your family for DC Text Alert to receive emergency text messages. (For further information, see "Emergency Notification," on page 3.)
- 8 Teach children how and when to dial 9-1-1 to get emergency assistance.
- 9 Teach children how to make long-distance telephone calls.
- 10 Pick a friend or relative that all family members will call if separated (it is often easier to call out-of-state during an emergency than within the affected area).
- 11 Instruct household members to turn on the radio and tune to the emergency alert radio stations listed on page 3.
- 12 Pick two meeting places:
  - ☒ A place near your home.
  - ☒ A place outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home after an emergency.
- 13 Take a Basic First Aid and CPR Class. Contact American Red Cross for more information.
- 14 Keep family records in a water- and fireproof safe. Inexpensive models can be purchased at most hardware stores.

### Things to think about...

If any members of your household have disabilities or are elderly, find out what services may be available to aid in their care or evacuation in the event of an emergency.



## Prepare an Emergency Go Kit

Often during an emergency, electricity, water, heat, air conditioning, or telephone service may not work. Preparing an Emergency Go Kit ahead of time can save precious time in the event you must evacuate or go without electricity, heat, or water for an extended period of time. You can gather water, food, first-aid supplies, clothing, bedding, tools, and other essential items to store at any time. You should consider including the following items in an Emergency Go Kit:



- 1 At least a 3-day supply of water (1 gallon per person per day). Store water in sealed, unbreakable containers. Replace every 6 months.
- 2 A 3- to 5-day supply of non-perishable packaged or canned food and a non-electric can opener.
- 3 Rain gear, sturdy shoes, and a change of clothing.
- 4 Blankets, bedding, or sleeping bags.
- 5 A first aid kit and prescription medications (be sure to check the expiration dates).
- 6 An extra pair of glasses or contact lenses and solution (be sure to check the expiration dates).
- 7 A list of family physicians, important medical information, and the style and serial number of medical devices such as pacemakers.
- 8 Special items for infants, the elderly, or family members with disabilities.
- 9 A battery-powered radio, flashlight, and plenty of extra batteries.
- 10 Identification, credit cards, cash, and photocopies of important family documents including home insurance information.
- 11 An extra set of car and house keys.
- 12 Tools such as screwdrivers, cutters, and scissors; duct tape; waterproof matches; a fire extinguisher; flares; plastic storage containers; needle and thread; pen and paper; a compass; garbage bags; and regular household bleach.

## If You Have Pets

Create a survival kit for your pet.  
This should include:

- Identification collar and rabies tag.
- Carrier or cage and leash.
- Any medications (be sure to check expiration dates).
- Newspapers and plastic trash bags for handling waste.
- At least a two-week supply of food, water, and food bowls.
- Veterinary records (most animal shelters do not allow pets without proof of vaccination).

In the event of an evacuation, you must take your pet with you. Make arrangements for pets in advance of an emergency.



## Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Working with neighbors in an emergency can save lives and property. Meet with your community members to plan how you could work together until help arrives.

If you are a member of a neighborhood organization, such as a home association or crime watch group, participate in emergency preparedness activities and planning for your community. Know your neighbors' special skills and consider how you could help those with special needs, such as people with disabilities and elderly persons.



## During an Emergency

Protective actions are steps we take to protect our family members and ourselves from harm. The two most common forms of emergency protective actions are **shelter-in-place** and **evacuation**. During and after an emergency, stay tuned to your local emergency station or listen to emergency personnel to know which protective action you should use.

## Emergency Notification

Alert DC is the District of Columbia's four-part citizen emergency notification system.

**Emergency Information Center (EIC) Web site:** This Web site ([alert.dc.gov](http://alert.dc.gov)) is a cross-agency portal for emergency preparedness information. It also serves as the official DC government on-line information source during an emergency.

**DC Emergency Text Alert:** The text notification system allows citizens to receive emergency text messages on any text capable device: cell phone, computer email, pagers, and fax. Citizens must enroll to receive text alerts. Enroll online at [alert.dc.gov](http://alert.dc.gov).

**DC Emergency Voice Alert:** A telephone voice messaging system that allows emergency managers to notify citizens of an actual or impending incident requiring protective action. Citizens are automatically enrolled.

**Emergency Alert System (EAS):** The District installed and tested new equipment at several area radio stations as part of its management of the Emergency Alert System, the partnership with local media in which emergency messages are broadcast over local media outlets.

Emergency personnel are trained to respond to these situations. They will tell you what to do, either at the incident site, or via TV or radio. Emergency Broadcasts can be received via the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The primary radio stations (FM/AM) to listen to in the District include the following:

WTOP 1500AM, 820 AM, 107.7 FM  
WMAL 630 AM  
WGMS 103.5 FM  
WJZW 105.9 FM  
WKYS 93.9 FM  
WHFS 99.1 FM  
WPGC 95.5 FM

## Shelter-In-Place

Shelter-in-place involves simply staying in your house or inside any other location you might be, in order to avoid harm. In the event of an emergency such as the release of a hazardous material, it is not always recommended to immediately evacuate, as leaving your house might expose you to harmful agents that have been dispersed into the air.



The DCEMA website—<http://dcema.dc.gov>—contains preparedness information, including the District Response Plan (DRP) and the Family Preparedness Guide.

The DDOT website—<http://ddot.dc.gov>—contains additional evacuation information as well as a map of event/evacuation routes.

## Evacuation by Walking

Many times, walking may be an effective means of evacuating a neighborhood or the District. If this method would be feasible for you or your family, be sure to keep a pair of good walking shoes at work or school.

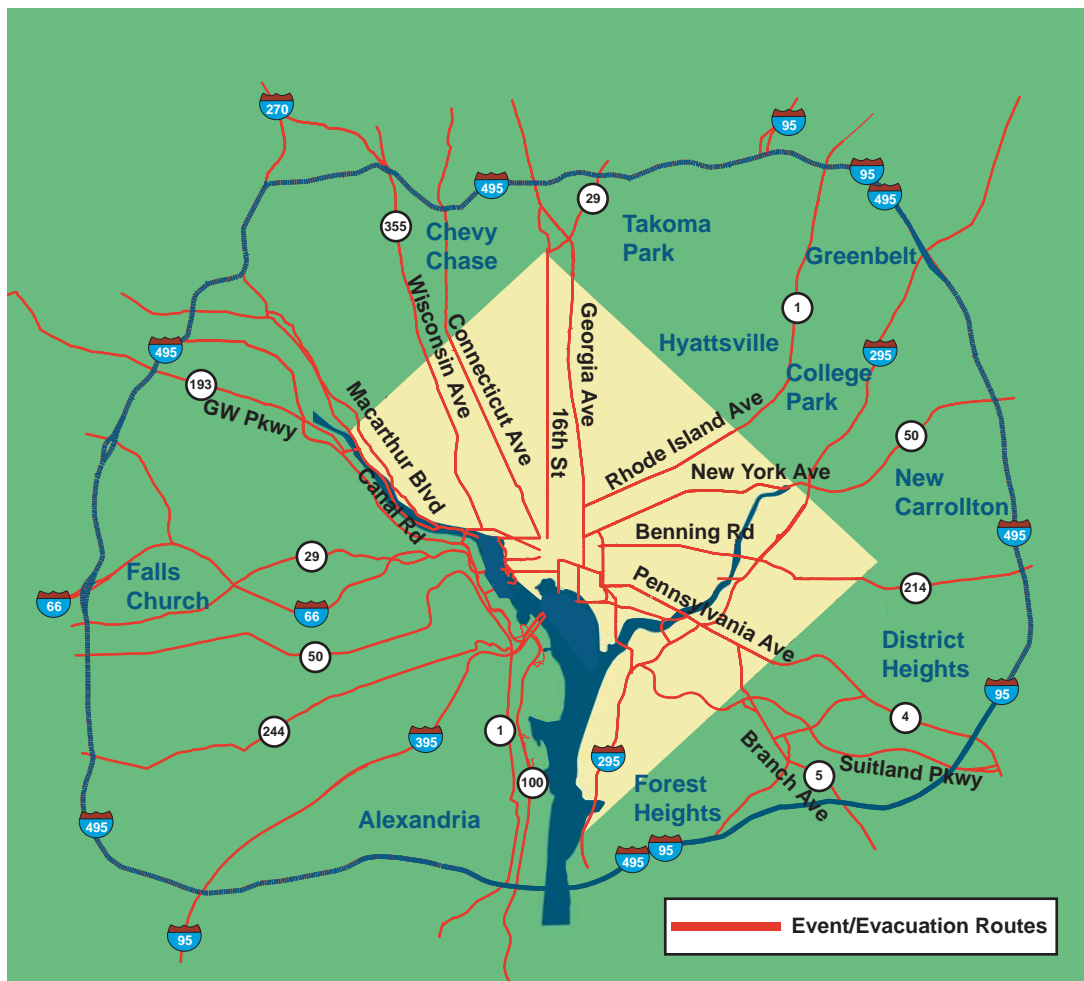
## Evacuation by Private Vehicle



The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has placed numerous road signs throughout the city that mark the 25 primary outbound evacuation or event routes. There are also inbound routes for emergency vehicles. These routes are clearly marked with signage directing motorists either to I-495 or to the Mall (Downtown) or identifiable by street name signs that include the red and white District Flag (3 red stars above 2 red bars). During an emergency, stay tuned to your local emergency station or Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) station (1650 AM), or listen to emergency personnel for instructions about which route to follow.

## Evacuation Map

The following map highlights the primary corridors radiating from downtown Washington, D.C. that have been identified as emergency event/evacuation routes. Each of the routes extends to the Capital Beltway (1-495) and beyond.



During a major event or emergency situation, radial evacuation routes featuring traffic signals will be timed on a 240-second cycle. In addition, 70 critical intersections on the event/evacuation routes within Washington, DC will be staffed with uniformed law enforcement officers to expedite the flow of traffic and prevent bottlenecks. These officers also will be able to direct you to alternate routes should an emergency warrant the closing of current event/evacuation routes. Variable message signs also will be posted on key routes throughout the city to provide information to motorists on road conditions and any other critical information. For more information go to [www.ddot.dc.gov](http://www.ddot.dc.gov) and click on "Emergency Preparedness."

Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, between Rock Creek Park and the U.S. Capitol serves as the dividing line for event/evacuation routes. When evacuation is ordered, motorists north of Pennsylvania Avenue will be directed North, East, and West on radial event/evacuation routes; motorists south of Pennsylvania Avenue will be directed South, East, and West on radial event/evacuation routes. None of the routes cross and no vehicles will be permitted to cross Pennsylvania Avenue during an emergency evacuation.

## Different Types of Emergencies

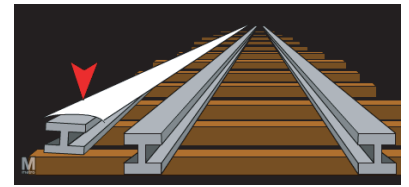
If an emergency should occur when you are riding on Metrorail or on a Metrobus, stay calm and listen for instructions from the train or bus operator. You also can call the train operator using the intercom located at either end of each train car. The operator may instruct you to remain on the train or to move to another car. If you are instructed to evacuate the train or bus, keep the following in mind:

### On the train

- Wait for the train to stop. Wait for instructions from the train operator.
- Identify the side of the train where you will be exiting:
  - ◀ If you are on a train in a tunnel, look for the side of the tunnel with lights and raised walkway.
  - ◀ If you are on elevated tracks outside, look for side with railing and walkway.
  - ◀ If on ground-level tracks outside, look for side away from the other set of tracks and the third rail, which generally has a white cover along it.
- Use the box with the emergency door release handle located to the left of the center doors of the car; pull the handle down, slide the left-center door to the left, and exit the train.
- Wherever you exit, BEWARE: DO NOT TOUCH THE THIRD RAIL OR THE PADDLES PROTRUDING FROM UNDERNEATH THE TRAIN. These carry high voltage electricity.
- Also, stay away from the train tracks. A train could come without warning. There is also electric current in the rails on which the train travels.



In tunnels, at intervals, the walkway switches from one side of the tunnel to the other or may run between two sets of tracks. To get from one walkway to another, cross the track avoid track equipment and water. Do not attempt to cross the third rail. This is an elevated rail that is higher than the two rails on which the trains travel. This rail transmits high voltage electricity to the trains. The third rail usually has a white cover board over the rail.



Every 2,500 feet there are emergency exits from the tunnel; these are marked with lighted exit signs. Use these exits, unless Metro or emergency response personnel tell you not to do so. These exits contain stairs that lead to the surface. At the top you will see hatchway doors; follow the printed instructions to open them and exit the surface.

## On the bus

- Wait for the bus to stop. Listen to the bus operator's instructions.
- Windows and ceiling hatches serve as emergency exits. Use the red levers on either side of a window to release it.

Overall, plan for transit emergencies by carrying the phone numbers of family members and neighbors and making sure that they have your contact information. Also, plan alternative routes to and from destinations. For additional information, visit [www.wmata.com](http://www.wmata.com) or [www.metroopensdoors.com](http://www.metroopensdoors.com), or call Metro at (202) 637-7000.

## Technological Hazards Emergencies

If you are notified or become aware of a technological hazards emergency such as a chemical, biological, or radiological emergency as well as a fire or explosion, **do not panic**. The best defense from any of these emergencies is education and awareness. In the unlikely event that there is a technological emergency, knowing how to respond will greatly reduce panic and fear. *If you need to get out of the surrounding area or are directed to evacuate, do so immediately and:*



- Take your Emergency Go Kit.
- Lock your home.
- Travel on routes specified by local authorities.
- Travel with car windows up and air vents, air conditioner, and heater turned off.
- Head up-wind of the incident.

*If you are sure you have time:*

- Close and lock windows and doors and close all vents and fireplace dampers.
- Turn off all fans and heat or air conditioning.
- Shut off water, gas, and electricity before leaving.
- Post a note telling others when you left and where you are going.
- Make arrangements for your pets.



*If you are instructed to stay inside and not to evacuate:*



- Close and lock windows and doors.
  - Turn off ventilation systems, water, and gas.
  - Seal gaps under doorways and windows with duct tape.
  - If you suspect chemical or biological agents have entered your house, move to a safe room in the interior of the house on a higher floor if possible. Many harmful agents that could enter a house will fall and accumulate at lower levels.
- If harmful vapors do enter the house, covering your nose and mouth with a cloth can provide minimal breathing protection.
- Stay inside until authorities say it is safe.

For information regarding the different types of chemical and biological agents and the supply of antibiotics available for each, visit the Centers for Disease Control website at <http://www.cdc.gov>, and the DC Health Department website at <http://dchealth.dc.gov>.

## Natural Hazards Emergencies

The District is vulnerable to a variety of types of severe weather including thunderstorms, hurricanes, flash floods, snow storms, and tornadoes. Because of this, it is important for you to understand the difference between a watch and a warning for severe weather. A **severe weather watch** means that severe weather may develop. A **severe weather warning** means a storm has developed and is on its way—take cover immediately!

The safest place to ride out **any storm** is inside of a secure building or well built home. Even in a well built apartment building you should:

- Listen to weather updates and stay informed.
- Keep away from windows and doors.
- Be ready to evacuate if necessary.
- Have your Emergency Go Kit handy.

**Lightning** is produced in all thunderstorms. In general, if you are close enough to a storm to hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck. Move inside as quickly as possible.



*If caught outside:*

- Try to get inside a building as quickly as possible.
- If a building is not available, move into a car with windows rolled up, if possible.
- In a group of people, spread out, keeping several yards apart from each other.

**Tornadoes** are dangerous because of their high winds and ability to lift and move heavy objects. If you receive a tornado warning, seek shelter immediately.

*If you are in your car:*

- STOP! Get out and lie flat face down in a low area.
- Cover your head and wait for the tornado to pass.

For additional information on severe weather conditions and precautions to take, visit the National Weather Service website at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov>.

### *At home:*

- Go to the basement or storm shelter, or rooms near the center of the house.

### *In a high-rise or other public building:*

- Move to the interior, preferably a stairwell or hallway.

### *Flash Flooding can be very dangerous because of strong, swift currents.*

- Move immediately and quickly to higher ground. The force of 6 inches of swiftly moving water can knock people off their feet!
- If flood waters rise around your car, get out and move to higher ground immediately. Cars can be easily swept away in just 2 feet of moving water!



## After An Emergency Strikes

During and after an emergency, it is important to stay calm. Even after an event, there may still be many dangers. What seems like a safe distance or location may not be. Stay tuned to your local emergency station (see page 3) and follow the advice of trained professionals. Unless told to evacuate, avoid roads to allow emergency vehicles access. What you do next can save your life and the lives of others. Here are some recommendations:

### If Your Power Goes Out

- 1 Remain calm, and assist family members or neighbors who may be vulnerable if exposed to extreme heat or cold.
- 2 Locate a flashlight with batteries to use until power comes back on. Do not use candles—this can cause a fire.
- 3 Turn off sensitive electric equipment such as computers, VCRs, and televisions.
- 4 Turn off major electric appliances that were on when the power went off. This will help to prevent power surges when electricity is restored.
- 5 Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to keep cold in and heat out.
- 6 Do not use the stove to heat your home—this can cause a fire or fatal gas leak.
- 7 Use extreme caution when driving. If traffic signals are out, treat each signal as a stop sign—come to a complete stop at every intersection and look before you proceed.
- 8 Do not call 9-1-1 to ask about the power outage. Listen to the news radio stations for updates.

#### **Business Preparedness**

Businesses are just as vulnerable to the effects of emergencies as ordinary citizens. There are basic steps that a business should take to prepare for an emergency. Some of these steps include:

- Prepare backups and store offsite all computer records (i.e. payroll, inventory records, etc.).
- Have an evacuation plan in place to evacuate staff and customers, and test this plan regularly.
- Maintain sufficient insurance coverage for your business.
- Identify critical business functions that absolutely must continue (i.e. shipping, inventory control, payroll) and come up with processes to ensure these will carry on.

## If You Need Clean Water

Flooding can cause contamination of water supplies. Bad water can contain microorganisms that cause diseases such as dysentery, typhoid, and hepatitis. If you think your water may be contaminated, you should purify it before using it. This includes water used for drinking, cooking, cleaning dishes, or bathing. The best way to purify water is to boil it.



Boiling is considered the safest method of purifying water. Bring water to a boil for 3-5 minutes, and then allow it to cool before drinking.

## Recovering from an Emergency

Recovery continues even after you return home, as you and your family face the emotional and psychological effects of the event. Reactions vary from person to person, but may include:



- Restless sleep or nightmares.
- Anger or wanting revenge.
- Numbness or lack of emotion.
- Needing to keep active, restlessness.
- Needing to talk about your experiences.

- Loss of appetite.
- Weight loss or gain.
- Headaches.
- Mood swings.

Crisis grief, and stress *counseling is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week* for you or a family member suffering persistent emotional or psychological problems related to an emergency. To access counseling services, call the Department of Mental Health Access Helpline at (202) 561-7000.

All of the above are normal reactions to stressful events, and it is important to let people react their own way. It may be helpful to:

- Talk with your family and friends about what happened and how you feel about it, and try to evaluate and plan for the chance it could happen again.
- Volunteer at a local shelter, blood bank, or food pantry to assist emergency victims.
- Spend time doing things other than watching or listening to news of the disaster.
- Consult your minister or other religious leader or spiritual advisor.

In particular, children may need reassurance and extra attention. It is best to encourage them to share their feelings, even if you must listen to their stories repeatedly-this is a common way for children to grasp what they've experienced. You may also want to share your feelings about the event with them.



District of Columbia Emergency Management  
Agency 2000 14th Street, N.W., 8th Floor  
Washington, DC 20009

## Important District Telephone Numbers

### Police, Fire, & EMS

#### EMERGENCIES

**911**

#### NON-EMERGENCIES

**311\***

|                                                |                |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| The Mayor's Citywide Call Center               | (202) 727-1000 |
| DC Emergency Management Agency (24 hour)       | (202) 727-6161 |
| (For the hearing impaired)                     | (202) 727-3323 |
| Department of Mental Health (Access HelpLine)  | (888) 793-4357 |
| American Red Cross, National Capital Chapter   | (202) 728-6401 |
| Verizon (phone)                                | (800) 275-2355 |
| PEPCO (electric)                               |                |
| (Customer service)                             | (202) 833-7500 |
| (Power outages)                                | (877) PEPCO-62 |
| (Life-threatening emergencies)                 | (202) 872-3432 |
| Poison Control Center                          | (800) 222-1222 |
| Washington Gas                                 |                |
| (Customer service)                             | (202) 624-6049 |
| (Natural Gas Emergency Number)                 | (703) 750-1400 |
| DC Water and Sewer Authority                   | (202) 787-2000 |
| (Water and Sewer Emergency Number)             | (202) 612-3400 |
| DC Health Department                           | (202) 671-5000 |
| West Nile Virus Call Center (Dept. of Health)  | (202) 535-2323 |
| DC Animal Shelter and Animal Issues (24-hours) | (202) 576-6664 |

Additional information on  
emergency preparedness  
is available by calling  
**FEMA** at: (800) 480-2520, or  
**DCEMA** at: (202) 673-2101, ext. 1137

Or on the **Internet** at:  
<http://www.fema.gov>  
<http://www.redcross.org>  
<http://dcema.dc.gov>

\*311 is a toll-free phone number to request  
police services in non-emergency situations.  
These are situations that are not serious,  
not life threatening, or not currently in progress.